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(12) UK Patent Application (19) GB (11) 2 313 789 (13) A

(43) Date of A Publication 10.12.1997

(21) Application No 9711811.1

(22) Date of Filing 06.06.1997

(30) Priority Data
(31) 08144102 (32) 06.06.1996 (33) JP

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(51) INT CL^6
A63B 37/00

(52) UK CL (Edition O)
A6D D1A

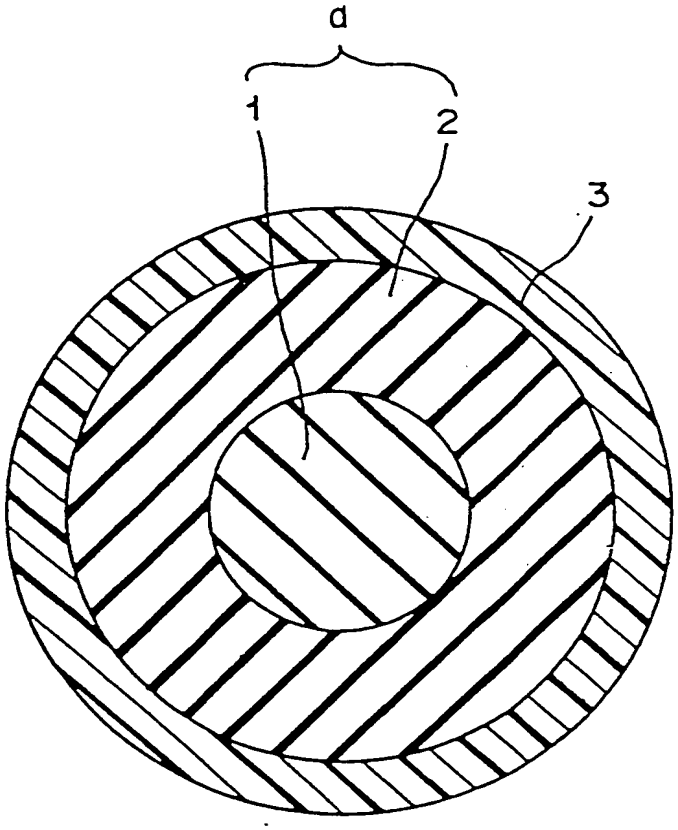
(56) Documents Cited
GB 2299518 A GB 2245580 A EP 0637459 A1

(58) Field of Search
UK CL (Edition O) A6D D1A
INT CL^6 A63B 37/00

(54) Three-piece solid golf ball

(57) A three-piece solid golf ball comprises an inner core, an outer core and a cover wherein the inner core has a diameter of from 31 to 36 mm and a JIS-C Hardness of from 60 to 85 and the outer core has a lower JIS-C Hardness than the inner core by from 5 to 25. The ball has excellent rebound and flight performance, durability and shot feel at the time of hitting.

Fig. 1



THREE-PIECE SOLID GOLF BALL

The present invention relates to a three-piece solid gold ball which possesses excellent rebound performance, flight performance, durability and shot feel at the time of hitting.

Golf balls generally fall into two categories. First, a solid golf ball, such as two-piece solid golf ball, three-piece solid golf ball, etc., which is composed of a core made of an integrally molded rubber member and a thermoplastic resin cover made from an ionomer resin. The other type of golf ball is a thread wound golf ball, which is produced by winding thread rubber around a solid or liquid center. A cover having a thickness typically of from 2 mm of an ionomer resin or balata is then formed around the center. The two-piece solid golf ball comprising a core and a cover is exclusively served in the market because it can be easily produced. The two-piece solid golf ball achieves a long flight distance because it attains a high ball velocity at the time of hitting, and is superior in durability and flight performance compared with a thread wound golf ball. Accordingly, the two-piece solid golf ball is used by many golfers, particularly amateur golfers. The two-piece solid golf ball, however, has a poor shot feel and lacks controllability at an approach shot owing to the low spin which can be imparted. Therefore, the two-piece solid golf ball has not been accepted by professional golfers and high-level amateur golfers, who consider that shot feel at the time of hitting and controllability are important.

For solving the problems associated with the two-piece solid golf ball, it has been suggested to make the solid core in a two-layer structure to form a three-piece solid golf ball. A solid core having a two-layer structure is described in Japanese Patent Kokai Nos. 241464/1985, 181069/1987 and 80377/1989, and the structural feature disclosed in these Japanese Patents is that the hardness of the outer layer core is set to a value higher than that of the inner layer core. That is, the amount of deformation of the golf ball is increased by making the hardness of the outside of the core higher, and gradually decreasing the hardness from the outside to the inside, thereby obtaining a soft shot feel. In such a structure, however, the durability of the golf ball is not particularly satisfactory.

Japanese Patent Kokai No. 23069/1994 suggests a similar three-piece structure wherein the hardness of the outer layer core is set to a value lower than that of the inner layer core. In the structure, with respect to the hardness distribution, the hardness of the outside is highest, and the hardness decreases gradually from the outside to the inside. There remains a problem, however, in that the rebound performance of the inner layer core is poor and flight distance is short.

The present inventors have carried out intensive studies in order to address the above problems. As a result, it has been found that, in a golf ball comprising a core (a) and a cover (3) formed on the

core, the core having a two-layer structure of an inner layer core (1) and an out layer core (2), the flight performance and durability are improved without deteriorating the shot feel and rebound performance by setting a specific gravity of the core, and a diameter, a hardness and a hardness distribution of the inner layer core (1), a hardness of the outer layer core (2) and a hardness of the cover (3) within a specific range.

A main object of the present invention is to address the above problems associated with conventional solid golf balls, thereby providing a three -piece solid golf ball which has a superior rebound performance, flight performance, durability and feel at the time of hitting.

This object as well as other objects and advantages of the present invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art from the following description with reference to the accompanying drawing.

The present invention will now be described further, by way of example, with reference to the attached drawing, in which:-

Fig. 1 is a schematic cross section illustrating a golf ball of the present invention.

The present invention relates to a three-piece solid golf ball comprising a core (a) and a cover (3) formed on the core, the core having a two-layer structure of an inner layer core (1) and an outer layer core (2), wherein the inner layer core (1) has a diameter of 31 to 36 mm and a JIS-C hardness of 60 to 85 and the core (2) has a lower JIS-C hardness than the inner layer core by 5 to 35. In order to carry out the present invention, it is

preferred that the JIS-C hardness of the above inner layer core (1) is within ±7% based on a center portion hardness and at least satisfies the following inequality:

(Center portion hardness of inner layer core) ≥ (Surface hardness of inner layer core)

and, the cover (3) has a Shore D-scale hardness of 55 to 75.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention will be explained in detail hereinafter. It is preferred that the inner layer core (1) used in the present invention has a diameter of 31 to 36 mm. When the diameter is less than 31 mm, the ball compression is too soft and rebound performance is poor. On the other hand, it exceeds 36 mm, the outer layer core is too thin and the presence of the outer layer is meaningless. It is preferred that the inner layer core (1) has a JIS-C hardness of 60 to 85. When the JIS-C hardness is less than 60, rebound performance is poor. On the other hand, when it exceeds 85 mm, shot feel is too hard. It is preferred that the JIS-C hardness of the above inner layer core (1) is uniform within ±7% based on its center portion hardness and at least satisfies the following expression:

(Center portion hardness of inner layer core) ≥ (Surface hardness of inner layer core).

When the JIS-C hardness of the above inner layer core (1) is not within ±7% based on its center portion hardness, the hardness from the center portion to the surface is ununiform and the rebound performance is deteriorated. When the surface hardness exceeds the center portion

hardness, shot feel is poor and durability is deteriorated.

It is also preferred that the JIS-C hardness of the outer layer core (2) is 5 to 25 lower than that of the inner layer core (1). When the JIS-C hardness is less than 5, shot feel is poor. On the other hand, when it exceeds 25, the hardness of the outer layer core is too low and rebound performance is poor.

A thickness of the outer layer core (2) is from 1 to 5 mm, preferably from 1.5 to 4.0 mm, because the diameter of the core (a) is generally from 38.0 to 40.0 mm. When the thickness of the outer layer core is smaller than 1 mm, the presence of the outer layer core is meaningless and shot feel is hard. On the other hand, when it exceeds 5 mm, rebound performance is poor and flight performance is poor.

A specific gravity of the core is preferably from 1.0 to 1.3 in view of the ball weight. In order to increase the moment of inertia, a specific gravity of the outer layer core is preferably more than that of the inner layer core. The specific gravity of the outer layer core is preferably from 1.1 to 1.3 and that of the inner layer core is preferably from 1.0 to 1.2.

The inner layer core (1) and outer layer core (2) used in the present invention are basically obtained by vulcanizing a rubber composition used as the core of the solid golf ball. The rubber composition generally contains a base rubber, a metal salt of an unsaturated carboxylic acid, an organic peroxide, a filler and the like. The base rubber includes natural rubber and/or a synthetic rubber which has been used in the solid golf ball. Particularly, a high-cis polybutadiene rubber having cis-1,4-bond of at least 40 %, preferably at least 80 % is preferred. If necessary, a

natural rubber, a polyisoprene rubber, a styrene-butadiene rubber, EPDM and the like may be added. The term "base rubber" generally means rubber components which are mainly contained in rubber component of the rubber composition and which predominantly shows the performance of the rubber.

The metal salt of the unsaturated carboxylic acid acts as co-crosslinking agent, and examples thereof include monovalent or divalent metal salt (e.g. zinc, magnesium salt, etc.) of an α,β-unsaturated carboxylic acid having 3 to 8 carbon atoms (e.g. acrylic acid, methacrylic acid, etc.). Among them, zinc acrylate which imparts high rebound performance is preferred. It is preferred that an amount of the metal salt blended is from 18 to 35 parts by weight in the inner layer and is from 15 to 30 parts by weight in the outer layer, based on 100 parts by weight of the base rubber. When the amount is larger than 35 parts by weight in the inner layer or larger than 30 parts by weight in the outer layer, shot feel is poor. On the other hand, when the amount is smaller than 18 parts by weight in the inner layer or smaller than 15 parts by weight in the outer layer, rebound performance is poor and flight distance is lowered.

The organic peroxide acts as crosslinking agent or curing agent, and examples thereof include dicumyl peroxide or t-butyl peroxide. Among them, dicumyl peroxide is preferred. It is preferred that an amount of the organic peroxide blended is from 0.5 to 1.5 parts by weight in the inner layer and is from 0.5 to 2.5 parts by weight in the outer layer, based on 100 parts by weight of the base rubber. When the amount is less than 0.5 part by weight in the inner layer or less than 0.5 part by weight in the

outer layer, the layer is too soft. Therefore, the rebound performance is poor and the flight distance is lowered. On the other hand, when the amount exceeds 1.5 parts by weight in the inner layer or exceeds 2.5 parts by weight in the outer layer, the layer is too hard and shot feel is poor.

The filler may be any one which is generally blended in the core of the golf ball, and examples thereof include an inorganic salt (e.g. zinc oxide, barium sulfate, calcium carbonate, etc.), a high-specific gravity metallic powder (e.g. tungsten powder, molybdenum powder, etc.) and a mixture thereof.

Another component which can generally be used in the production of the core of the solid golf ball, such as antioxidants, peptizing agents, etc. may be added to the rubber composition of the core of the golf ball of the present invention.

In the present invention, an outer layer core (2) is formed on an inner layer core (1). A difference in hardness between the inner layer core and outer layer core is adjusted by changing the amount, sorts of component and vulcanization condition of the rubber composition.

The above core is then covered with a cover (3).

The cover can be formed from ionomer resin and balata, which are generally used as cover material of the solid golf ball, and a small amount of the other resin may be added. In addition, the above cover composition may contains fillers such as barium sulfate, etc., additives for coloring, such as titanium dioxide, etc. and other additives such as ultraviolet absorbers, light stabilizers, fluorescent materials, fluorescent brighteners, etc. as far as desired characteristics due to the golf ball cover

are not deteriorated.

The cover layer of the present invention is formed by a generally known method used for forming the cover of the golf ball, e.g. injection molding, press molding and the like. It is preferred that the cover of the golf ball of the present invention has a Shore D-scale hardness of 55 to 75. When the Shore D-scale hardness is less than 55, rebound performance is deteriorated. On the other hand, when it exceeds 75, shot feel is hard. A thickness of the cover layer is preferably from 1 to 4 mm. When the thickness is less than 1 mm, the hardness of the whole golf ball is small and the rebound coefficient is small. On the other hand, when it exceeds 4 mm, the hardness of the whole golf ball is large and controllability and shot feeling are poor. The cover layer has a Shore D-scale hardness of preferably 55 to 75, more preferably 60 to 75. When the Shore D-scale hardness is less than 55, rebound performance is poor. On the other hand, when it exceeds 75, shot feel is poor. When covering, a large number of depressions, so-called "dimples", are formed on the surface. The golf ball of the present invention is generally coated with paint in order to enhance appearance and commercial value, and then put on the market.

The present invention provides a solid golf ball whose flight performance and durability are improved without deteriorating shot feel and rebound performance.

In the golf ball of the present invention, comprising a core and a cover (3) formed on the core, the core having a two-layer structure of an inner layer core (1) and an outer layer core (2), the flight performance and

durability are improved without deteriorating shot feel at the time of hitting, by setting a diameter, a hardness and a hardness distribution of the inner layer core (1), a hardness of the outer layer core (2) and a hardness of the cover (3) within a specific range.

EXAMPLES

The following Examples and Comparative Examples further illustrate the present invention in detail but are not to be construed to limit the scope thereof.

(Examples 1 to 8 and Comparative Examples 1 to 3)

Inner layer core

A composition for inner layer core of a formulation shown in Table 1 was kneaded, followed by press-molding under the following vulcanization condition to produce a spherical inner layer core having a specific gravity and a diameter shown in Table 1.

Table 1

(Parts by weight)

	Example No.								Comparative Example No.		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3
BR11[1]	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Zinc acrylate	25	22	19	25	22	22	25	28	22	15	22
Zinc oxide	19.6	20.7	21.8	19.6	20.7	20.7	19.6	18.5	20.7	23.3	20.7
Antioxidant[2]	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Dicumyl peroxide	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.8
Specific gravity	1.13	1.13	1.13	1.13	1.13	1.13	1.13	1.13	1.13	1.13	1.13
Diameter (mm)	32	36	35	35	35	35	31	35	27	35	35
Vulcanization condition	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B

Vulcanization condition A: 140°C × 30 minutes + 165°C × 8 minutes

B: 165°C ×20 minutes

Outer layer core

The above inner layer core was concentrically covered with a composition for outer layer core of a formulation shown in Table 2, followed by vulcanizing at 150°C for 20 minutes to obtain a spherical core having a diameter of 39 mm and a specific gravity shown in Table 2.

Table 2

(Parts by weight)

	Example No.								Comparative Example No.		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3
BR11[1]	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Zinc acrylate	22	19	15	15	19	19	21	22	19	31	17
Zinc oxide	20.7	21.8	23.3	23.3	21.8	21.8	21.0	20.7	21.8	17.4	23.3
Antioxidant	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Dicumyl peroxide	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Specific gravity	1.13	1.13	1.13	1.13	1.13	1.13	1.13	1.13	1.13	1.13	1.13

Cover

The resulting solid core was covered with a cover composition of a formulation shown in Table 3 and, after removing burr formed on a flash line of molds, paint was applied to obtain a solid golf ball having a diameter of 42.7 mm.

Table 3

(Parts by weight)

Kind	a	b
IOTEC8000[3]	50	–
IOTEC7010[4]	50	–
Hi-milan 1706[5]	–	50
Hi-milan 1605[6]	–	50
Barium sulfate	2.0	2.0

1) Polybutadiene, manufactured by Japan Synthetic Rubber Co., Ltd.

2) Yoshinox 425, manufactured by Yoshitomi Pharmaceutical Industries, Ltd.

3) Ionomer resin (Shore D-scale hardness* 61), manufactured by Exxon Co.

4) Ionomer resin (Shore D-scale hardness* 57), manufactured by Exxon Co.

5) Ionomer resin (Shore D-scale hardness* 66), manufactured by Mitsui Du Pont Polychemical Co., Ltd.

6) Ionomer resin (Shore D-scale hardness* 67), manufactured by Mitsui Du Pont Polychemical Co., Ltd.

*ASTM D 2240

With respect to the resulting solid golf ball, the diameter and hardness of the inner layer core, hardness of the outer layer core, hardness of the cover, launch angle, spin, flight distance (carry), durability index and feeling at the time of hitting are shown in Table 4 (Examples) and Table 5 (Comparative Examples). A test method is as follows.

(Test method)

(1) Launch angle, flight distance and spin

A driver (w#1) was attached to a Swing robot manufactured by True Temper Co. and a golf ball was hit at a head speed of 45 m/second. A distance (carry) to the dropping point was measured as a flight distance and a launch angle was measured. Spin was measured by continuously taking a photograph of the golf ball hit.

(2) Durability index

A driver (w#1) was attached to a Swing robot manufactured by True Temper Co. and a golf ball was hit at a head speed of 45 m/second and the number of hitting until the breakage arose (resistance number to impact) was measured. The resulting value was indicated by an index in case of the value of Example 1 being 100.

(3) Feeling at the time of hitting

It was evaluated by practically hitting with 10 professional golfers. Evaluation criteria are as follows.

Evaluation criteria:

◎: Excellent

○: Good

△: Ordinary

×: Too soft

(Test results)

Table 4

		Example No.							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Diameter of inner layer core (mm)		32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
Hardness of inner layer core (JIS-C)									
	Center portion	78.8	74	67.5	79.5	75	75	78.5	84
	5 mm	79	74	68	79	75	75	79	84.5
	10 mm	79	74.5	67	79	75.4	75.4	79	84
	15 mm	79.8	74	67	79.6	76	76	78.8	84
	Surface	78	73	65	76	74	74	78	82
Hardness of outer layer core (JIS-C)		73	67	60	60	67	67	70	74
Difference in hardness*		5.0 - 6.8	5.0 - 7.5	5.0 - 8.0	16 - 19.6	7.0 - 9.0	7.0 - 9.0	7.0 - 9.0	8.0 - 10.5
Formulation of cover		a	a	a	a	a	b	b	a
Hardness of cover (Shore D-scale hardness)		72	72	72	72	72	70	70	72
Flight performance (W#1)	Launch angle (degree)	11.10	11.45	11.35	11.27	11.38	11.34	11.10	11.25
	Spin	2850	2690	2710	2880	2730	2810	2855	2890
	Flight distance (yard)	227.0	229.6	227.6	229.3	228.8	227.3	226.6	229.5
Durability index		100	125	120	110	115	125	110	110
Feeling		○	◎	○	○	◎	○	○	○

* Difference in hardness = (hardness of inner layer core) - (hardness of outer layer core)

Table 5

		Comparative Example No.		
		1	2	3
Diameter of inner layer core (mm)		27	35	35
Hardness of inner layer core (JIS-C)				
Center portion		74	60	65
5 mm		74	60	67
10 mm		74	60.5	68
15 mm		--	59	73
Surface		73	56	75
Hardness of outer layer core (JIS-C)		67	85	64
Difference in hardness*		6.0 - 7.0	-29 - -24.5	1.0 - 11.0
Formulation of cover		a	a	a
Hardness of cover (Shore D-scale hardness)		72	72	72
Flight performance (W#1)	Launch angle (degree)	10.90	11.27	11.25
	Spin	3060	2700	2760
	Flight distance (yard)	224.5	226.1	225.3
Durability index		65	60	70
Feeling		×	○	△

* Difference in hardness = (hardness of inner layer core) - (hardness of outer layer core)

As is apparent from the above results, the golf balls of

Examples 1 to 8 are superior in flight distance, durability and feeling to those of Comparative Examples 1 to 3.

CLAIMS:

1. A three-piece solid golf comprising a core (a) and a cover (3) formed on the core, the core having a two-layer structure of an inner layer core (1) and an outer layer core (2), wherein the inner layer core (1) has a diameter of from 31 to 36 mm and a JIS-C hardness of from 60 to 85 and wherein the core (2) has a lower JIS-C hardness than the inner layer core by from 5 to 25.

2. A three-piece solid golf as claimed in claim 1, wherein both the inner layer core (1) and outer layer core (2) are composed of a vulcanized product of a rubber composition containing a base rubber, a metal salt of an unsaturated carboxylic acid, an organic peroxide and a filler, and the JIS-C hardness of the inner layer core (1) is within ±7% based on a center portion hardness and satisfies the following expression:

(Center portion hardness of inner layer core)≥(Surface hardness of inner layer core)

3. A three-piece solid golf as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the cover (3) has a Shore D-scale hardness of from 55 to 75.

4. A three-piece solid golf as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the outer layer core (2) has a thickness of from 1 to 5 mm.

5. A three-piece solid golf as claimed in any one of claims 2 to 4, wherein the inner layer core (1) comprises from 18 to 35 parts by weight of a metal salt of an unsaturated carboxylic acid and/or the outer layer core (2) comprises from 15 to 30 parts by weight of a metal salt of an unsaturated carboxylic acid, based on 100 parts by weight of the base rubber.

6. A three-piece solid golf as claimed in any one of claims 2 to 5, wherein the inner layer core (1) comprises from 0.5 to 1.5 parts by weight of an organic peroxide and/or the outer layer core (2) comprises from 0.5 to 2.5 parts by weight of an organic peroxide, based on 100 parts by weight of the base rubber.

7. A three-piece solid golf as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the cover (3) has a thickness of from 1 to 4 mm.

8. A three-piece solid golf substantially as herein described with reference to any one of Examples 1 to 8.

9. A three-piece solid golf substantially as herein described with reference to or as illustrated in Figure 1.

The Patent Office

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Application No: GB 9711811.1
Claims searched: 1 to 9

Examiner: Alan Blunt
Date of search: 12 September 1997

Patents Act 1977
Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK Cl (Ed.O): A6D (D1A)

Int Cl (Ed.6): A63B 37/00

Other:

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage		Relevant to claims
A, P	GB2299518A	(SUMITOMO) - whole document	1
X	GB2245580A	(ILYA) - whole document	1
X	EP0637459A1	(BRIDGESTONE) - Examples 2, 4, 6 and 7	1 to 9

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Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
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